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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ADDIS ABABA 000207

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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/FO AND AF/E
LONDON, PARIS, ROME FOR AFRICA WATCHER
CJTF-HOA FOR POLAD

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TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREL](#) [MASS](#) [KDEM](#) [ET](#) [SO](#)

SUBJECT: ETHIOPIA: USG ASSISTANCE NEEDED TO MEET BURDEN OF WAR

REF: A. ADDIS ABABA 115 (NOTAL)
[1](#)B. ADDIS ABABA 105 (NOTAL)
[1](#)C. ADDIS ABABA 80
[1](#)D. ADDIS ABABA 40

Classified By: AMBASSADOR DONALD YAMAMOTO. REASON: 1.4 (B), (D).

FOR AF A/S FRAZER FROM AMBASSADOR YAMAMOTO.

[1](#)1. (S/NF) SUMMARY. Ethiopia's announcement that it will begin withdrawing troops from Somalia highlight the GOE's assessment that it has largely met its strategic objectives. While active engagement by the USG and others in the international community will be required to mobilize and support an IGASOM deterrent force to replace the departing Ethiopian forces (ENDF), USG assistance is also critical to enable the Ethiopian government to address serious domestic challenges: 20 per cent inflation, chronic unemployment, and food insecurity affecting urban as well as rural poor. In addition to continuing robust security cooperation and intelligence-sharing with the GOE, the USG must help advance Ethiopia's political and economic reform: leveraging the latitude for policy reform that Ethiopia's military success in Somalia has afforded Prime Minister Meles within his ruling TPLF party, and building on recent progress the GOE has made toward WTO accession. A positive response to the Prime Minister's request for food aid would not only alleviate food insecurity but also help advance political and economic reform, by allowing highly conservative TPLF supporters to ease their tight grip on food reserves, thus lowering consumer prices. Training and material support for the ENDF would also underscore our support for further developing Ethiopia's role in international peacekeeping, currently the world's sixth-largest troop contributor to UN peacekeeping. This would entail expanding our meager FMF (USD 2.4 million) and IMET (USD 600,000) to accommodate DOD efforts to support the ENDF's priorities of C-130 aircraft maintenance and training. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (S/NF) The feeling among many Ethiopians, and shared within the GOE, is that Ethiopia is bearing a heavy burden for Somalia and paying the cost in terms of casualties. For the general populace, the concern is, "Why Somalia?" The bigger concern is domestic issues: a 20 per cent rise in food and fuel costs; unemployment; and the plight of the urban and rural poor.

13. (S/NF) The GOE is deeply sensitive to outside criticism, from conditioning assistance to progress indicators on human rights and political reform under the Smith-Payne bill, to possible U.S. action against Ethiopia in response to the military importation of 3 million Euros worth of spare parts from North Korea (ref B) for their old Soviet-style factories producing critical military supplies for the war effort in Somalia.

14. (S/NF) The Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF) continues military operations against extremist elements, with U.S. guidance and intelligence support. Cooperation remains strong, and our intelligence-sharing relationship is robust. While the ENDF has redeployed to Kismayo and other centers, it is clear that the war effort is too expensive for the ENDF to remain constantly deployed in the field. There are also concerns that they are becoming targets of Somali attacks. The ENDF is tough and has a high threshold of pain to meet military objectives. Many ENDF casualties were preventable, but with limited helicopter support focused on operations, the wounded were being carried by truck to the backlines, a hard and arduous trip, which meant a higher death rate for wounded. The ENDF consistently asked us for helicopter lift in the early stages of the war.

15. (S/NF) In numerous discussions with PM Meles, both in private and in company with visitors, the PM has remained consistent on his themes that Ethiopia's actions in Somalia will bring peace and stability to the region. While the Council of Islamic Courts (CIC) has been disbanded and extremist elements weakened, Meles looks to the international community to follow-up with IGASOM and, more important, to assist in helping stabilize and develop Somalia. Concerns

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remain that extremists will make their way to Mogadishu, but senior Ethiopian leaders note that the rest of Somalia is relatively stable and that the extremists have been weakened.

In recent consultations, senior GOE officials downplay the likelihood of a robust insurgency emerging in Mogadishu in the near term. (NOTE: While PM Meles had urged TFG President Yusuf to delay the impeachment of TFG Parliamentary Speaker Sharif Hassan Sheikh Adan, GOE leadership consider it unacceptable for former leaders of the CIC to participate on an equal basis with TFG principals in any national dialogue on Somalia. The GOE views the TFG as the only acceptable entity to push for national reconciliation. In this context, PM Meles has pushed the TFG hard to engage other clan leaders, especially representatives of the Hawiye/Habr-Gedir/Ayr sub-clan, in addition to Hawiye clan leaders. END NOTE.)

SUCCESS IN SOMALIA PROVIDES POLITICAL SPACE AT HOME

16. (S/NF) The unexpected success in neutralizing the CIC has given the PM political space within his own ruling TPLF party to address the more pressing and critical problem of political reform. We are close to a deal that would see the release of the primary opposition leaders, who have now been political detainees for over 14 months. Political reform--from parliamentary and electoral board reforms, to media openness--are making progress, albeit slowly. Economic reform will also be slow, but steady. The Prime Minister has committed his government to accession to the WTO, which should eventually force the TPLF away from monopolistic holdings to a more open private-sector-led growth.

17. (S/NF) What does Meles want? He and the Ethiopian leadership welcome international support to create a new order in Somalia. While critics will argue that Ethiopia wants a weak and divided Somalia, this is clearly "old think". Meles and his government see a stable and friendly government in Somalia, or at least not a sponsor of extremism, as more important. The experience and the high

cost of operations in Somalia underscore for the GOE the need for international commitment to stabilize and develop Somalia.

ETHIOPIA SEEKS FOOD AID AND SECURITY ASSISTANCE

¶8. (S/NF) Meles also would welcome more public acknowledgement of things he is doing right, rather than what he feels is an overly critical view of his government. A statement of acknowledgement from us at the highest level once the detainees are released would help support Meles, policy and give him room to maneuver within the TPLF. Putting to rest the Smith-Payne bill on Ethiopia would also add much to ease Meles, sensitivities.

¶9. (S/NF) The Prime Minister's request for food aid for the urban poor (ref A) would help him in the urban areas, but, more importantly, would help push his highly conservative TPLF supporters to ease their tight grip on food reserves. This will help bring consumer prices down, already hitting 20 per cent increases this year. Training and materials for the ENDF would also underscore our support. This would entail expanding our meager FMF (USD 2.4 million) and IMET (USD 600,000) to accommodate DOD efforts to support the ENDF, s priorities of C-130 aircraft maintenance and training.

¶10. (S/NF) What we get: These efforts will also help us dialogue more constructively with the Prime Minister on human rights and political reform, which in the end will help strengthen Ethiopia's political structure and strengthen our relationship. He would be more receptive knowing that we have helped him loosen the reigns of the TPLF, and we will benefit by persuading Meles and his government to be more open to reform and human rights.
YAMAMOTO